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Portables to be 'green'

Posted By Courtney Whalen

Posted 8 days ago

When eight portable classrooms arrive at the site of the H.W. Pickup replacement school there will be something different about them.

The eight buildings will support a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design silver standard, making them more efficient and healthier for the staff and students using them.

"Clearly your school board did a great job in proving their case," said Janeen Norman, director of public relations for Modus Inc., the Alberta company that has been contracted by the the Alberta government to provide relocatable classrooms to schools throughout the province.

Norman said it's "amazing" for one location to be getting eight of the "green" classrooms.

Energy efficient elements, attention to high air quality, the use of no poisons, toxins or CFCs and maximizing natural light are all features of the portables, or relocatables.

"It's completely revolutionary to what was before," said Norman of the older portable classrooms that dot the education landscape.

Gord Majeran, secretary-treasurer for the Wild Rose School Division said the request for the portable classrooms was part of the overall plan for the replacement school. The school had requested nine portables in all.

Last week he said he wasn't familiar with the various green elements of the classrooms they will be receiving, but he expected they would arrive some time in the spring.

For the past several years the provincial government has been rolling out new portable classrooms to schools across the province, to deal with the deterioration of existing ones.

"We had a lot of portable classrooms out there for 20-25 years and most of them have lived their lives," said Kathy Telfer, spokesperson for Alberta Education.

While investigating well-constructed buildings that could meet the educational needs of students and act as "seamless" classrooms, the government went through an official selection process, which Modus has won a number of times.

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With fluctuating enrolment portable classrooms are an important addition to the core school and classrooms.

"It's flexibility to respond to some local needs," she said, noting Modus was able to best meet the criteria the province was looking for.

The fact their classrooms are constructed to a high energy and environmentally efficient standard is an added benefit.

"It makes them very, very attractive to us," said Telfer of the portable classrooms. "We know we're doing the right thing."

"The Alberta government is really a leader in the country," said Norman, noting Modus has done business with other province's but not on as large a scale as they are here. "Alberta's just doing a really good job."

Norman said the green classrooms being produced for Alberta school's address many areas that emerged as concerns in traditional portables, including potentially hazardous building materials and the encroachment of unwanted visitors into the building.

"The old portables, they've had their issues for mold and pests, but the air tight (construction) doesn't allow for that," said Norman.

Majeran said his understanding is that H.W. Pickup's new portables should be constructed early in the new year and be delivered in the spring. Completion of the core building of the replacement school is on target for April 2010.

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